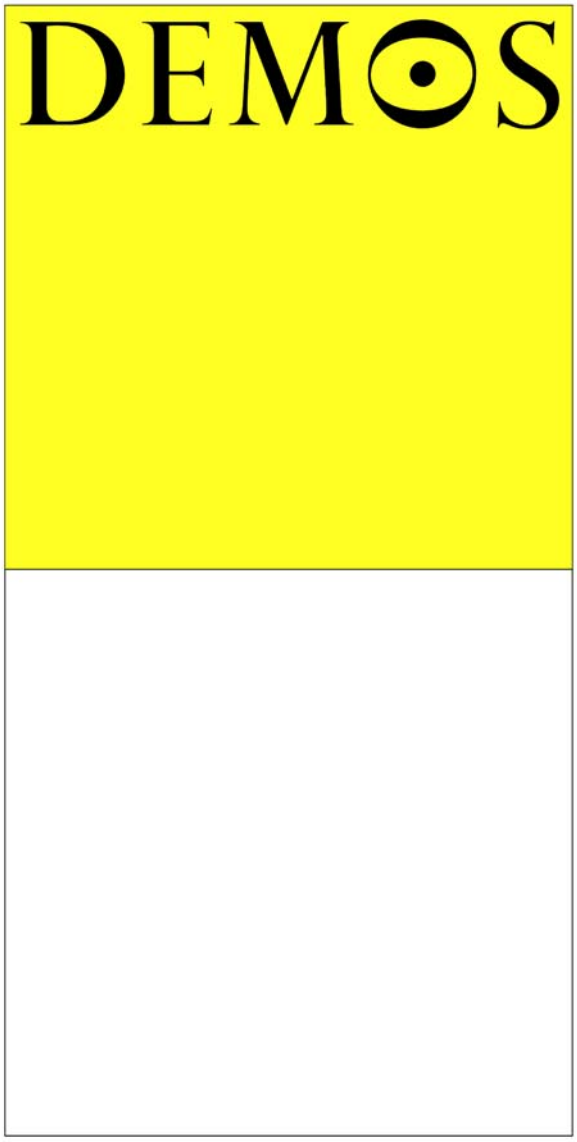

DIY Professionalism

Futures for teaching

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Contents

1. Introduction

Ask a politician about teachers and they will tell you about schools – ask a teacher about themselves and they will tell you about their pupils. Teacher professionalism is inextricably linked to doing what is best for children – this is the end of teacher professionalism, it is both the motivation and the desired outcome. But this report, while keeping all of this in mind, is unashamedly about teachers and the teaching profession. It asks what kind of teacher professionalism we need in order to do our best for children and seeks to shed light on the stress and sense of diminished professionalism that teachers across our education system report. In doing so, it aims to empower both teachers and others within the education system to better understand and influence some of the forces that shape their professional lives.

Today, we expect teachers to ensure child safety, regenerate whole communities and to search young adults for weapons. We look to them for salvation from every social ill and become frustrated when, inevitably, salvation is slow to come. As a result, teachers have worked their way deep into our collective psyche. The public's and policy makers' sense that teachers can save society, the pupils' trust in them and teachers' own shared norms and ethics all shape teacher professionalism. This report is about some of that hidden professional wiring, and how it works in practice in schools across England.

The report argues that, almost unannounced, teaching has changed fundamentally in a range of ways. Change has always been a constant in teaching, but today, with schools' and teachers' responsibilities more diverse than ever, the profession is developing on several fronts simultaneously. As teachers experiment with their professional roles, they are subject to both new burdens and new freedoms. Beyond whether teachers are more or less professional, the very game of professionalism is changing.

Many teachers are increasingly active in shaping and defining their own professionalism. However, today this is as much a source of constraint and exhaustion as it is of creativity. Further, while they may shape their own sense of professionalism, many feel that they have much less control over their work. The inevitable tension between day to day work and personal investment – a tension that is defining of professionalism – has always existed. Indeed professional bodies, regulations, rituals and rules were a set of mechanisms designed to make that tension bearable. But as teachers become much more diverse as a group and face some difficult challenges professionalism is under strain and can no longer fulfil this bridging function. There is an urgent need to re-connect teachers with their changing professionalism and to show how it increasingly lives in their everyday habits, relationships and values. From here, teachers themselves can be helped to build new professional structures and support.

DIY professionalism

In the next section we examine the notion of professionalism, and how it relates to teaching, in more depth. By teacher professionalism we mean a set of collectively held norms that regulate the teaching profession according to values and practices that are embedded in the experience of shared professional goals and relationships. Our research in schools shows that the best way to understand the consequences of recent changes in teaching is in terms of DIY professionalism. The idea that teaching is increasingly about DIY professionalism amounts to five specific claims about the profession

- Markers of teacher professionalism are increasingly cultural and informal rather than structural and formal.
- Professionalism is more deeply personal than ever before, so that views of the profession are much more diverse. For some, the job is more satisfying while for others it is more stressful and exhausting.
- However, teachers retain an ideal of a unified, independent and formally structured profession. But the distance between this ideal and the lived, daily experience of teaching creates a sense of a profession that has lost its way.
- A significant proportion of the teaching profession is expressing its creativity through entrepreneurship and experimentation around teachers' professional roles and status. These experiments are happening locally with parents, pupils, other professionals and other school staff.
- We need to help teachers to generate new relationships, structures and rituals to share these experiments with one another and to understand their significance for the profession. We need to ensure that DIY professionalism works for rather than against our education system.

Across society, professionalism increasingly refers to an individual's attitude and behaviour rather than to a group's formal status and collective identity. Someone in almost any line of work can do a 'very professional job'. This is more than simply a corruption of the term – it is part of a broad shift in the way life is regulated. As both organisational and domestic life have become more complex, making formal control very difficult, society increasingly relies on the power of informal norms and ethics, which we call 'soft governance'.

As a result of these changes, **markers of teacher professionalism are increasingly cultural and informal**. Rather than a national level, 'profession-wide' professionalism, it is the cultures of schools, teacher networks and local areas are more significant than ever in defining and sustaining teachers' professionalism. This shift can clearly been seen in teachers' work. While teachers can still influence curriculum, pedagogy, quality assurance and school (and system-wide) decision-making, they rarely do so through formal channels, enshrined by right.

The power of soft governance stems from winning hearts as well as minds. As a result, more than ever, teachers' professionalism consists in believing, owning and internalising a set of principles to which they work. In this sense, **teachers' professionalism is becoming increasingly personal** – teachers' ethics rest on a foundation of personal idealism and are regulated by personal conscience. And, while professionalism has always been about self-regulation, this self-regulation took place at a collective level. Today's self-regulation tends to take place at an individual, or at least localised, level. For some, this responsibility can be a source of satisfaction, for others it can lead to exhaustion and anxiety. For good or ill, this fragmentation means that teachers no longer share in a collective vision of their profession's future. The role of the GTC is in large measure to offer a site and a set of support networks that can help to offset some of the costs of the transformation of the teaching profession by ensuring a collectively held professionalism.

In the absence of this vision, teachers might be placing greater emphasis than ever on a shared view of their profession's past. This vision of the past draws on the **idea of a golden age,** during which teachers were independent, highly respected and had clearly limited responsibilities. In fact, this myth grew in significance *only as teaching was changing*, becoming more dynamic and more connected to policy-makers, other professionals and the public. It began, however, as an expression of professional self-confidence. The danger now is that it serves as a map of the professional terrain that hinders more than it helps. To solve this problem, the first challenge is to help teachers to generate a new picture of their professionalism.

There is abundant material with which teachers can create new images of their profession. Across our increasingly diverse education system, alongside pupils, parents and other professionals, more teachers than ever before **are experimenting with professional roles** and protocols.

However, with the wrong professional map, there is a danger that these explorers will get lost or that we will not recognise the significance of what they build or find. Without a coordinating vision of their future, it is difficult for teachers to know whether their profession as a whole resembles the part they can see. For example, some teachers believe that in the emerging scientific understanding of learning, they are discovering a knowledge base to rival that of doctors. Some believe that Every Child Matters is enabling teachers to build on their unique understanding of the 'whole child' and coordinate a whole range of services around their needs. As a result, not only is there greater opportunity than ever before to shape new visions of teachers' future, but doing so is more vital than ever. The coherence and dynamism of our education system increasingly depends upon finding new ways to **ensure that DIY professionalism works for rather than against our education system**.

How can this be done? There are two vitally important consequences of the growth of DIY professionalism.

- Teachers' professionalism used to mirror the structures of the education system, now it is a buffer against them.
- Teachers professionalism is increasingly dependent on very localised experience.

While these developments can be perceived as part threat and part opportunity, both of these shifts create tensions in our education system – tensions that might prove unsustainable unless they are acknowledged and addressed. DIY professionalism is a system that risks relying on a personal and individualised professionalism that it can do little to support or renew. And in driving professionalism underground in this way, it also risks hiding fragmentation in teachers' practices. As a result, the challenge is to unlock the creative potential of DIY professionalism to enable teachers themselves to build new public and collective systems of professional support.

First, the spread of market forces through our education system seems to depend for its effectiveness on the counter-balancing force of professional norms and ethics. Schools could increasingly seek to serve narrow, institutional interests, but the hope is that leaders' sense of 'moral purpose' will prevent this. Teachers could seek to focus solely on standards within their own classrooms, but the hope is that a sense of collegiality (itself a part of teacher professionalism) will prevent this. This is a significant new development for their professionalism. For many teachers, it creates a sense of confusion and dissonance that can lead to stress and frustration and a retreat from public norms and expectations. These vital professional norms demand and deserve explicit time and investment.

The second impact of a professionalism that is informal, localised and personal is that the network forms that are increasingly significant in school relationships are now more important to understanding the profession. The form teachers' professionalism takes increasingly depends on context, on the myriad of relationships of which they are a part. Teachers' professionalism, more than ever before, is different for different teachers. In this sense, today professionalism travels less like a broadcast and more like Chinese whispers. Here, the risk is not simply fragmentation but hidden fragmentation. The very point of Chinese whispers is not simply that the message changes, but that this change is invisible.

The system must learn to moderate and manage these two sets of consequences and the role of the GTC is to do just that by helping to create a new literacy in professional conversations. For that it needs to focus on three priorities:

- New sites of authority and dialogue
- Modern professional rituals for teaching
- New forces for professional connection and recognition.

2. That was then: The myth of the golden age and its unravelling

Teachers retain huge faith in the power of professionalism. But public narratives have a habit of outliving not only their truth, but their usefulness. Teachers are taught to engage in a tug-of-war between their own control of education and external government (or market) control. However, as control of education for any single group is increasingly difficult, the relevance of this tug-of-war is declining and the pay-offs dwindling. Teachers need a new narrative of professionalism which is as much about managing inter-dependence as it is about achieving autonomy and which can help teachers to manage the quickening pace of change in our public services.

As the teaching profession developed, it created a public story, seeking to associate itself with 'elite professions' such as law and medicine. This resulted in the idealisation not only of the profession's public respect but its perceived independence. In the post-war period and through the sixties, the myth of professional control of curriculum and pedagogy grew steadily. Today, as we shall argue in the next chapter, professional independence has become the only vision that teachers continue to share. However, it is ill-suited as either an accurate picture of teaching's history or a shared objective for its future.

It is questionable whether 'elite professions' ever had more than fleeting exclusivity in controlling their work. In teaching certainly, inspectors and universities were eroding teacher control as early as the 1950s.[1] Indeed, McCulloch points to the remark made by Robert Lowe (an education administrator in the 1860s) that 'teachers desiring to criticise the code were as impertinent as chickens wishing to decide the sauce in which they would be served'.[2] In fact, the myth of professional independence and the sense of its absence in practice grew together. Over the decades, what began as an expression of self-confidence has come to haunt the teachers as a professional yard-stick.

Teachers are not alone in being haunted in this way. As an example, Schön writes of doctors,

> As physicians have turned their attention from traditional images of medical practice to the predicament of the larger health care system, they have come to see the larger system as a "tangled web" that traditional medical knowledge and skill cannot untangle. How can physicians influence a massively complex health care system which they do not understand and of which only a small fraction is under their direct control?[3]

The same might be said of teachers. For any team or group, the coordinating power of a common enemy and sense of injustice can be powerful. However, when a foundation myth comes to debilitate a profession, it is time to develop a new one.

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[1] McCulloch, G., Helsby, G. and Knight, P. (2000) *The Politics of Professionalism* (London and New York: Continuum), p. 13.
[2] McCulloch et al (2000).
[3] Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (London: Basic Books), p.14.

Keeping up with the times

Just as the golden age increasingly serves teaching poorly as a foundation myth, it is unhelpful as a shared objective for the future. In particular, two seismic shifts make the circumstances in which teaching must re-generate shared professional commitments very different.

First, in his work on the 'new culture of capitalism', Richard Sennett talks about the ways in which we make sense of our lives by believing that accumulation of experience counted for something.[4] However, today, Sennett argues, we are seen as valuable not for what we have achieved in the past but what we might do in the future.

How adaptable are we? Throughout recent school reforms, changes to the environment in which schools operate have been mirrored by changes to that in which teachers work. Schools have experienced changes to funding models, the introduction of new providers, growing specialisation, pressure to collaborate through Every Child Matters, workforce reform and new organisational structures such as Federations. Alongside these changes, teachers have experienced greater flexibility over contracts, an opening up of routes into their profession, the rise of Advanced Skills and Fast Track Teachers, new collaborative roles within extended schools and new approaches to organisation.

In schools, we were able to observe both a heavy focus on change and its far-reaching effects. Across our research participants, we asked what it took to survive teaching. Almost universally, the answer was 'confidence in the face of change'. New ideas may indict existing practice, but teachers have learnt the imperative of keeping up and moving on. Those colleagues who fell by the wayside, they reported, were not the incompetent or unpopular, they were those who found change difficult. One head teacher, in fact, linked developing professionalism with the capacity to 'move on'. As she said, 'I often tell them that I don't want to see them here for longer than 4 or 5 years – my staff don't know what to make of that. Of course I don't want to "get rid" of them, but I want them to acquire the tools and confidence to make other choices.' Being a professional there now means being able to 'graduate' from this context. And in any case, she points out 'this is not about the staff feeling that they want to be here forever – I don't run a facility for teachers, I run a facility for children.'

For some, change was simply impossible, so that their practice fell short of ever-evolving inspection regimes and school criteria. However, for many more, it was the stress and disillusionment that came with constant change that had taken its toll. We need to shape an education system in which teachers can work together to build professional structures and rituals that can do more to support their colleagues through the sometimes painful process of innovation.

Strength in networks

As we ask more of schools, they are increasingly unable to 'go it alone'. Schools have sought to specialise in particular areas and to draw on the expertise of partner schools and other institutions. In this way, school reforms have allowed the dynamics of specialisation and collaboration to develop in tandem. Specialist schools, academies, training schools and extended schools have developed *alongside* networking, area-based initiatives, federations and work under Every Child Matters.

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[4] Sennett, R. (2006) *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (London: Yale University Press).

In school governance, therefore, networks are everywhere. They serve to connect experiments across the system to its formal decision-making processes. For example, Networked Learning Communities have played an important role in curriculum development, Federations school improvement and help for failing schools. As local authorities adapt to this changing environment, decision-making is increasingly being devolved to networks of schools and school leaders, who as part of the Every Child Matters agenda form increasingly significant delivery relationships directly with leaders within other services.

Equally, while teachers aspire to professional independence (harking back to teaching's supposed golden age) they are increasingly caught up in inter-dependent relationships with policy-makers, other professionals and pupils and parents. As a result, teachers are engaged in daily negotiations around their professional role. Personalisation, parent power and networked and cluster-based decision-making all mean that, whatever their professional ideals, no teacher ever can be an island. Alongside professional structures that support teachers in changing times, we need a professionalism that regulates and balances these relationships rather than impugning them with an ideal of glorious isolation.

In this sense, as government has taken a step back, allowing a newly diverse and dynamic system to begin to exercise its capacity for self-improvement, it has enabled others to take a step forward. From personalisation to parent power to a range of new cluster and network-based initiatives, it has enabled the development of new sites within the system for dialogue about education and reflection on system progress. They are able to exploit connections between the growing range of educational networks and public decision-making structures, from the level of the classroom to national, to express their views about the education system. However, part of the problem is that these new networks often struggle to influence system-wide progress. They are not 'scaling up' and, in fact, are creating a type of system discrepancy which in turn contributes to DIY professionalism. Undoubtedly, one of the roles that the GTC can play is that of system 'connector' in order to make the most of localised best-practice.

Taken together, these trends are playing a vitally important role in the emergence of a DIY professionalism. Yet teachers continue to look for national monuments to a professionalism that is all around them, embodied in everyday habits and interactions and personal relationships.

3. Disrupted Teacher Identity

A range of social and economic changes mean that the certainty and security with which professionalism provides teachers is declining. Beyond the rhetoric of government and unions, professionalism itself is changing.

Teachers' professionalism developed in response to two intruding forces, the state and the market. Structures and cultures of internal control went some of the way toward preserving teachers' habits and ethics against government intervention and market encroachment. In this respect, teachers' professionalism is about far more than labour market organisation.[5] For many professions self-regulation and autonomy were protection against commercial and political forces that sat uneasily with their personal ethics.

Autonomy and self-regulation, therefore, are core elements of the idea of professionalism. But in the case of the teaching profession, this self-regulation is curtailed by the fact that it is the Secretary of State for Education who controls entry into the profession. Self-regulation, in the case of teaching, might therefore be more akin to a form of 'self-determination' – an important nuance, in particular in a situation where the professions that teachers looked to as models of professionalism are moving in different directions. As a result, a survey of the literature suggests that ideas of teacher professionalism have tended to rest on four foundations, with self-regulation discharged through control of entry to the profession and the specification of public standards and competencies. The four foundations are

- A type of expert knowledge
- Autonomy
- Ethical concern for the client
- Socialisation of members based on social integration and reward structures.

More important than the form professionalism takes, however, is its function. Professionalism served to negotiate boundaries between the bureaucratic rationality of public life and the personal ethical stances of teachers themselves. In this sense, professionalism served as a bridge between teachers and the society they served. Professional structures acknowledged that teachers had certain public responsibilities but limited the huge personal burden that this might place on them. They enshrined professional influence but limited that influence. In doing so, the four foundations of teachers' professionalism were important, but the function of negotiating teachers' public position and role far more so. Beyond its particular foundations, it is whether this professional bridge can still hold despite a changing and diverse profession that is its real test.

Work with teachers in our study suggested that teachers' professionalism was increasingly struggling to perform this bridging role. At times teachers expressed the sense that they were 'drowning' under the weight of public expectation and responsibility, at times they seemed to retreat from all responsibility but delivering the curriculum in classrooms. There is confusion about whether teachers owe it to society to stay up to the small hours, ironing coursework for moderators or whether they owe it to themselves to keep stricter divides between home and work. Professionalism is starting to struggle to resolve these dilemmas with any conviction and clarity between what is and is not 'down to teachers'.

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[5] Sachs, J. (2003) *The Activist Teaching Professional* (Buckingham: Open University Press).

Why is this happening? Our research points strong to the significance of blurring of boundaries between teachers' homes, work and the wider community. As an example, at Camrose Children's Centre, the staff share a story of a local primary teacher. One week she told her reception class the story of Jungle Jim. At the weekend, she made a video of Jungle Jim to show the class next week – 'guess who I bumped into at the weekend', she says. The man in the video is her husband, and the adult eye can see him grudgingly but obediently responding to her off-camera prompting. 'No, how did you *light* the fire?' she asks at one point, an edge of frustration appearing in her voice. 'Well, you marry the job, don't you?' says one of the teachers.

The personal is professional

For teachers the boundaries between the home and the workplace have always been tenuous, perhaps more so even than in other caring professions.

All caring professions may seem to present fuzzy boundaries. Indeed professions are, in part, held to be so because of a particular relationship with the 'client' (be it a patient, a pupil or a lost soul) defined by the professional's willingness to offer both expertise and individual advice and attention. This meant, always, a level of closeness and commitment that went hand in hand with high levels of trust – in fact a relationship born of a mix of asymmetry of knowledge in a particular area and trust. This asymmetry of knowledge made trust both necessary and easier to abuse (the innocence of a child, the vulnerability of a patient) professionalism as a system of self-determination and authority emerged in part to temper the risks in individual responsibility (not personal commitment).

Further, despite the parental engagement agenda, teachers feel increasingly – particularly in challenging schools – that their role is to inculcate in children that which parents are not inculcating at home, or to provide the regularity, boundaries, rewards and punishments that would often have been associated with family life. That's not to say that good teachers haven't always been able to see the pupil as a whole child or that some pupils haven't always needed a bit of extra attention, but we are witnessing an increasing burden of development and care placed on teachers that often resembles a form of parenting.

A substantial number of our research participants described their role in part as a 'surrogate parent'. As concerns grow about pupil behaviour and as teachers come to see their role in terms of knowledge of the 'whole child', this ultra-personal connection to work may be much-needed. However, the fact that teaching increasingly draws on personal emotional resources is important to acknowledge.

Also, with schools increasingly being asked to 'play a role in the community', boundaries between school and the rest of life are being eroded. It stands to reason that the boundaries between home and school, and between teachers and other forms of authority become porous too.

The spreading of market norms

Teachers' home and work lives are also being changed by commercialisation. The growth of the market within education has been well-documented. From the rise of the quasi-market for school places to the entry of new private providers into schooling, this growth continues to gather pace. For teachers, this demands that they take an increasingly entrepreneurial attitude to their work.

The shifting sands of teachers' lives as professionals, private individuals and public citizens makes the task of bridging and regulating the boundaries between them increasingly difficult. The pressures against which professionalism should be a bulwark increasingly transcend the distinctions it traditionally defends.

Pros and cons of DIY professionalism

This new connectedness in teachers' lives means that they must give more of themselves and take much greater responsibility. However, for those with sufficient confidence and security, it opens up new opportunities for entrepreneurship and creativity.

In a school co-ordinated through soft governance, teachers must not simply follow the rules but own them, believe in them and internalise them. Sustaining a professional ethic is down to them. In the past, professional status, and thus the self-determination that came with it, was rooted in the public prestige, autonomy and socialisation processes associated with the professions. These public rituals carried the burden of sustaining a professional ethic.

Today, it seems to be done by individual teachers to themselves rather than by the profession to itself – it seems to have been privatised and gone from being a collective process to an individual one. The GTC can serve precisely the purpose of re-collectivising the profession in meaningful ways.

As a result, if there is a conflict between different government initiatives, individual teachers must think their way through it. If a lesson goes badly, teachers themselves know the OFSTED framework and have been taught to 'self-evaluate'. While the person who comes down hardest on a teacher at the end of a difficult day has always been they themselves, we argue that this is a greater load for them to bear than ever before.

However, while this shift in teacher professionalism asks more of teachers it also creates new opportunities to carve out spaces of personal autonomy and creativity. The flip side of a profession that relies on colonising teachers' weekend thoughts and own common sense is that their personal views of the profession grow in significance. In a world where professionalism travels less like a broadcast and more like gossip, if they can muster the energy, confidence and support, teachers can re-shape their profession from the ground up. This is DIY professionalism.

An individualised experience of teaching

The level of personal responsibility that teachers shoulder today makes for a highly personalised experience of teaching. Professionalism in general has fundamentally changed and as a result, processes of professional identification have been deeply disrupted. In a world of DIY professionalism, satisfaction and confidence can rest on a knife edge.

It is impossible to know whether we should think of the teacher and her Jungle Jim husband with whom we began as a victim or a beneficiary of DIY professionalism. However, our research shows that they are both out there. For some, teaching is becoming more stressful and exhausting and they have a sense of loss about their professionalism. They feel compelled to make huge emotional investments in the norms that govern their work, to police their own teaching and to draw constantly on intimate, personal reserves to sustain the ethic of the profession. They have

constantly to reinvent the wheel of professional norms and values and this is exhausting.

This also shows the risk of professional fragmentation. Today, the teaching profession could fragment and no one would know. The individualised, DIY, gossip-like experience of professionalism could become a Chinese whisper. There is a danger that professionalism – for so long a force for coherence and adaptation – may begin to run in the opposite direction.

The challenge for teaching is to develop new professional ethics, rituals and structures that support those for whom this is most difficult, without squeezing out the democratic potential that for others DIY professionalism represents. Professional change has a vital role to play in helping teachers to make the kinds of distinctions between home and work and between commercial life and ethical life that work for them. But these are huge tasks that cannot be fully accomplished on an individual or even entirely localised level, they need the engaged institutional support that a body like the GTC has been dispensing.

4. This is now: Cameos from a fragmenting profession

The following cameos serve both to introduce schools with whom we have worked and to provide a range of examples of the invisible diversity associated with DIY professionalism. They also help us to track the way that professionalism is being shaped and how the dimensions that are at the heart of professionalism are evolving, ebbing, flowing or fluorescing.

Fragmentation and entrepreneurialism:

1. Cornwallis

Cornwallis School in South Maidstone is part of a federation of three schools called New Line Learning. In this sense, the school is at the forefront of exploiting new freedoms around school governance. As a result of its growth, the organisation of which Cornwallis teachers are a part has become much more significant.

Working across a number of sites and increasingly thinking about what the New Line Learning brand has to offer the system, the federation is starting to define for itself what it means to be a teacher. In this sense, the organisation is increasingly doing the work of a profession and professional association.

In this sense, the status of staff autonomy has shifted within the school. In the past, the Headteacher Chris Gerry argues, the culture of schooling has been 'producer-dominated'. He has used his position as Chief Executive to re-orient this culture. Today at New Line Learning, the customer is king, and staff autonomy, in the past theirs as of right, must now be earned. For example, while nationally there is agreement that teaches will perform a more limited number of expert tasks, at Cornwallis their role is resolutely about multi-tasking alongside other staff. As a result, the primary virtues at Cornwallis are initiative, confidence and the ability to encourage and inspire students.

2. Greig Academy

Greig was the first Academy. Created in 2001, the main thrust of the experiment was to transform a challenging North London school into a model of efficiency and discipline. Five years on and with a good Ofsted inspection to its name, Greig is a changed school. For staff who have gone through these changes, they boil down to instilling discipline and standards to pupils – and much the same for them.

Even a cursory chat with staff reveals the three pillars of teacher professionalism at Greig: substituting for parents; developing the right communication skills in a school with 600 pupils and 69 different languages (half the pupils speak English as a second language); and knowing how to make the most of the army of technicians and assistants.

Teacher professionalism at Greig is a little bit like a pastoral version of law and order: with the help of pastors and priests as well technicians (well versed in music production AND disciplinary methods) who play good cop/bad cop the staff try to maintain enough orderliness to get through a lesson. Greig is a specialist art school and the trick has been to turn the art (music, singing, and drawing) classes into rewards for behaving appropriately outside the classroom. As that behaviour improves so does behaviour in other classes and, in time, standards.

Much of teacher professionalism thus boils down, as one teacher said, to resisting the temptation of looking like the students, of talking like them in an attempt to reach them. 'It is very hard to keep your distance when you spend so much of your time parenting them and what you really want to do is say 'look I'm just as cool and hip as you are, but you're behaving like an idiot.'

Implications

Cornwallis and Greig are two striking examples of the evolution of teacher professionalism toward a much more fragmented and entrepreneurial style. While expert knowledge is prized, the emphasis is on standardised delivery and branding (heavy at Cornwallis, lighter touch at Greig). Autonomy for both teachers and pupils is hard earned and constantly negotiated. Socialisation of members occurs at the school rather than professional level.

We're on a mission: fragmented and internalised professionalism

1. The Ravenscroft

The Ravenscroft have made the most of new flexibility in *access* to the teaching profession. Over the last three years, twelve new teachers have joined the school through London's Teach First scheme, which places young 'outstanding graduates' in schools that need them following six weeks of intensive training.

In the educational press, Teach First's corporate character and the way in which it by-passes established routes into the profession has been relatively controversial. However, it seems that at the Ravenscroft these teachers have been absorbed into the culture of the school with relative ease.

This seems to be because of the strong professional culture of the school. Teach First recruits note that the 'American Dream' of Teach First was quickly replaced in their minds by the welcoming attitudes of other school staff. While inevitably there is diversity of practice and background across the school teachers, they are integrated by signing up to the same principles.

In this sense, at the Ravenscroft, the school is itself increasingly a place where teachers' professionalism constantly has to be re-invented. To manage this additional function, their teachers have come to see ethics and values as much more central their professional identity. The way in which working at the school demands that staff internalise these norms makes it very confident about absorbing outsiders.

Additionally, for staff at the Ravenscroft, this professionalism is about a therapeutic commitment to improving the lives of the young people who attend the school not only by equipping them with skills for adulthood but in helping them to lead a happy childhood.

2. Camrose Children's Centre

At Camrose Children's Centre, which looks after children from birth to age five, teachers are in a very new setting. The origin of Children's Centres in the Every Child Matters shapes these teachers' approach to their work. Camrose is taking advantage of government pressure to open up teachers' work to other professionals and to parents.

Within the centre teachers form a management cadre, taking overall responsibility for its development. They understand the centre's development in terms of a learning process, focusing on enquiry-led professional development and theory-building about the children they serve. This helps to legitimise their hierarchical position, making management their prerogative as experts in learning.

Camrose is working to build teams of professionals 'around the child', which will be largely led by teachers. At Camrose, therefore, they are imagining a profession that is the key broker between children and children's services.

3. Calthorpe Special School

Calthorpe Special School in Birmingham is a flag-ship school with roughly 200 staff (of which nearly half are supervisors, drivers and individuals otherwise engaged in dealing with the acute mobility problems of the pupils) and 270 pupils with disorders ranging from autism to profound mental and physical disability.

Most striking about Calthorpe is the co-existence of a form of heightened specialisation with a great sense of freedom. At Calthorpe every skill is honed in an extreme context: teaching reading skills is broken down to its most basic constituents and helped along with symbol cards to aid autistic pupils; physical education takes on a whole new meaning when that education is addressed to profoundly physically disabled children. In the case of the latter, it is a question of identifying and exercising very basic muscle function. All skills are broken down and then re-constructed to fit pupils with a variety of extreme needs.

At the same time, teachers at Calthorpe view themselves as free from the daily drudgery imposed by SATs and GCSEs. Teachers plan their own curriculum: 'I feel completely in control, trusted and accountable and not like a paper-pusher' said one of them.

The responsibility, overall, is felt to be to the community of children with special educational needs: the capacity to influence government in relation to SEN is paramount and clearly at the forefront of everyone's mind. Most especially in the Headteacher's Graham: 'doing the best for these children means "getting around" a lot of stuff, representing them because they are even more voiceless than others, and in the case of this school, embedded in largely voiceless and deprived communities. Championing special educational needs at government level comes before everything else.'

Given these needs, one major consequence is the staff to pupil ratio: no group is ever bigger than 7 or 8 pupils and there are never less than 3 staff present. As a result and as pointed out by several people, the key to working at Calthorpe is, paradoxically, not so much an ability to work with children, but an ability to relate to adults, to facilitate a group, to be clear with members of staff. 'My job', said one member of staff, 'is about facilitating a group of staff around pupils.'

What consequences does all this have for a professional ethos? How do teachers in such contexts perceive their links to other teaching professionals? Three things are particularly striking: the major role played by CPD; the role of networks; and the aspiration to influence a broader system (in no other school were staff as candid about the wish, in time, to run their own school 'to change things').
Professionalism in this context is defined by a mix of hyper-specialisation (that requires constant updating through CPD) and constant monitoring and exchange through networks of schools and advocacy. This school conceives of professionalism as a relay. Professionalism is about connecting adults in the

context of specific tasks, connecting schools, connecting skills that may not necessarily be seen to go together in a mainstream school and, for all staff, connecting to government.

Implications

While each of these schools interprets its mission differently, the sense of an overwhelming commitment to the whole child is at its heart. This is about much more than learning, or even education – it is about development. Both offer a variation on internalised professionalism in which an ethical concern for the pupil matters above all else and in both cases is served by a combination of a sense of autonomy and personal commitment. The mission is defined by the infinitely particular character of the school on the one hand and each whole child on the other. Here too socialisation occurs at the level of the school rather than the community or the profession as a whole.

Me and my town: think national act local

St Guthlac

St Guthlac extended school is in Crowland. In more ways than one, St Guthlac is at a cross-roads: Having narrowly escaped special measures in its 2005 Ofsted inspection, a school that was, by all accounts, adrift, is seeking under a new Headteacher and the committed enthusiasm of its staff to reinvent its relationship to its students and thereby to the scattered community of which it increasingly sees itself as both the potential hub and the servant. For staff at St Guthlac, professionalism is about the reality of serving a rural community with severe mobility and aspirational issues, while making the most of what is being offered by an education system which is seen as both remote and as a life-line to improvement.

Bronia came in as acting head in 2004. Eighteen months down the road, not only is she Headteacher, she is the woman who got the school through a much feared Ofsted inspection, who has put in a bid for specialist school status and is regarded as the best thing that's happened to St Guthlac in a long time. 'We want to transform this school,' she says, 'and at the same time, transform the town.'

Professional development (seen as one of the surest ways to connect the school to the vast world of national education) is the first mantra of St Guthlac – and the pass to real professional status. St Guthlac tells us something important about teacher professionalism in that respect: that plugging into professional networks, be they for Heads or for other staff , is key to a sense of professional improvement and self-confidence. This is not necessarily news, but despite the fragmentation of the profession, for some schools, particularly more rural or isolated ones, being a teaching professional is inexorably linked to a national context and striving to integrate (or re-integrate) the school in that national context is the 'professional thing to do'.

Despite having their eye on nationally conferred excellence and confidence, in the past year, staff at St Guthlac have invested much time and resources in reconnecting with the community. The school has undertaken a community consultation by sending 4000 questionnaires across Crowland and the surrounding villages.

Implications

St Guthlac is a perfect example of 'negotiated autonomy': accountability is not perceived so much as a burden – at least in its current form – as a tool for the shaping of excellence. Autonomy here is earned as a consequence of abiding by the rules of a nationally regulated profession. In many ways St Guthlac is a perfect example of professionalism in action. Committed to CPD, plugged into all that national level professional support can offer the school uses professional norms to enhance the autonomy of both teachers and pupils through socialisation and the development of shared norms while becoming increasingly connected to the community around it.

5. The future's bright: Scenarios

Given the pressures we've outlined and the practices that emerge from our cameos, we have elaborated 6 possible 'near future' scenarios for teacher professionalism based on different types of autonomy and expertise. These are archetypes designed to highlight possible developments – each represents the end point of a particular set of professional characteristics. In 'real life' they would mix into one another and become approximations or composites – but, drawing with stark blunt lines allows us to glimpse the contours of what might lie ahead and what teacher professionalism could look like in 10 to 15 years time.

Pro-am teacher: blurring the boundaries between living and learning

The development of teaching has been driven by worries about the pressures on family life. As a result, schools have focused on creating small communities of children of all ages and their parents. Teachers lead these networks, working with parents to staff and resource high quality learning and care from eight in the morning until six at night. Teachers trade on professional competence and humanity – their ability to form good relationships with parents and pupils and to get things done. Their professional autonomy grows out of negotiations with parents and community members, who are the primary source of accountability.

On the one hand, with an aging entry into the profession, the recruitment of teachers increasingly depends on family friendly patterns of work. On the other, schools have come under pressure to help parents more and to focus on looking after and socialising children. As a result, many teachers are now high-flying graduates down-shifting to start a family, whose own children are among those they teach and look after. As long as they have demonstrated generic professional competence in previous work, teachers can earn accreditation on the job. Teachers are increasingly driven by the idea that family comes first and a concern to give something back to society. Their quality of life is a source of huge national intrigue in a world of ever-increasing stress and working hours. However, while the blurring of family and work life is fantastic for some teachers, for others it is extremely stressful.

	Subject	**Child**	**Learning**	**Service**
Complete autonomy	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
Negotiated autonomy	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	Entrepreneur
No autonomy	Broker	Key Worker	Trades Person	Sales Person

The teaching consultant: back to the future

The development of the teaching profession has primarily been driven by the exponential growth in home learning. Forty per cent of school-age children now spend their days at internet cafes and youth clubs, making only occasional visits to

school. The enormous number of video and animated resources available online means that even within school, the teacher's role is very different. Teachers design learning environments and experiences rather than deliver content and are available for consultation when learners 'get stuck'. They spend most of their time developing the skills and systems used by parents and the intermediaries who staff the various spaces where children learn.

Teachers' expertise lies in their subject and pedagogical knowledge. However, one step removed from learners, their contribution to the education system is increasingly difficult to assess. To compensate, there has been a huge growth in the number of different accreditation routes for teachers, with measures of customer-satisfaction play a growing role in determining their pay.

As consultants, many teachers have become self-employed, able to contract between different public and private institutions. As a result, many are well-paid and there is a sense that teaching has finally cemented its place as an elite profession. As a result of the diffuse and intangible nature of their work, professional self-regulation is difficult. Teachers are held to account by pupils and parents through contracting institutions.

The relative separation from classes of children makes teaching less of a stressful job but for some also less satisfying. However, teachers are driven by the ethic of empowering others by sharing their knowledge as widely as they can.

	Subject	**Child**	**Learning**	**Service**
Complete autonomy	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
Negotiated autonomy	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	Entrepreneur
No autonomy	Broker	Key Worker	Trades Person	Sales Person

The learning broker: ECM networks in action

Through the growth of extended schools, teachers have accumulated the responsibility of coordinating services around the needs of each child. As a result of this pivotal position, from children's health to management and co-ordination, learning is a dominant paradigm. Teachers have become a management cadre, diagnosing children's needs and brokering services to support them.

Teachers' expertise lies in child development and in navigating complex systems of children's services. As a result, teachers combine a relatively large caseload with a range of more bureaucratic responsibilities. There is a sense that 'the buck stops with teachers' and they face a stringent audit and inspection regime. This emphasis on teacher responsibility has seen the public's love/hate relationship with teachers intensify.

The teaching profession has been re-shaped around teachers' new responsibilities, but the linear approach to career progression has been replaced by a lateral one. Teachers are encouraged to seek mentors, to work in schools beyond their own and to seek secondments to other sectors. Professional development focuses on the

inter-personal systems thinking skills teachers need to survive and innovate within complex environments.

Teachers' status and role means that there is a strong distinction between their home and work lives. At work, teachers are driven by an ethic of public service and a sense of their own power to change children's lives. However, they are conscious of public pressure and exposure as a result there is a strong emphasis on self-regulation through the professional association.

	Subject	**Child**	**Learning**	**Service**
Complete autonomy	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
Negotiated autonomy	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	Entrepreneur
No autonomy	Broker	Key Worker	Trades Person	Sales Person

Life coach: the school of life

With knowledge more easily accessible than ever and young people leading increasingly independent lives, teachers have become more like life coaches. They focus their contact time on inspiring students to learn, equipping them with the skills they need and developing strong pastoral relationships.

Teachers' expertise lies in developing the arts of teaching – building empathy and excitement and modelling fairness and consistency. Pressured by Headteachers concerned about school image, teachers have developed a tight focus on customer service. Technology enables pupils to have 'home rooms' while teachers, like university lecturers, are constantly on the move. Teachers adhere to strict codes about how they relate to pupils – eye contact, language and demeanour are all emphasised in staff handbooks. Staff are monitored every month on how much their pupils enjoy their lessons. While this can create pressure, teachers appreciate that the school system now 'measures what matters'.
Transparency about teachers' work enables performance-related pay, from which most teachers earn a good living in enviable working conditions. In this context, the right to innovate in schools and classrooms has to be earned. While progress through the profession can be rapid, there is a strong distinction between school leaders – many of whom have substantial experience in the commercial sector – and other teachers.

Through this focus on the learning experience, relationships between staff and students are of an unprecedented quality, and many emphasise the friendship and mutual respect they feel. In contrast, relationships with parents and community members are a much lower priority. Teachers are driven by an ethic of respect and care with personalisation the profession's watch-word.

	Subject	Child	Learning	Service
Complete autonomy	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
Negotiated autonomy	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	Entrepreneur
No autonomy	Broker	Key Worker	Trades Person	Sales Person

Entrepreneurs and explorers, or how the individual won out

The marketisation of education means most teachers are employed by federations of hundreds of schools. With teachers federations' primary asset, staff retention has become vitally important. Beyond pay, federations seek to appeal to teachers' ethics, seeking brand distinction by espousing different views about what lies at the heart of teaching. This creates new opportunities for teachers to innovate – to act as explorers and entrepreneurs in the public interest – developing new relationships across children's services or communities. Using this entrepreneurial experience, a minority of teachers are taking advantage of market freedoms by founding their own small schools.

Beyond minimum professional standards, teacher expertise varies a great deal between federations. As a result, adaptability and initiative are prized above all. Teachers' primary accountability is to their federation, who in the drive for loyalty through strong culture, also play many of the roles of professional bodies. Federations seek to define teachers' mission, so that many feel, for example, that they are 'Capita first, teacher second'.

The size of federations demands that they operate national approaches to talent spotting. As a result, there is strong demand from teacher for development and leadership opportunities across large networks of schools. Federations have large venture capital funds for teacher research projects, some of which have had far-reaching implications for the shape of public services. As a result, the transformative potential of the teaching profession is increasingly publicly acknowledged and school leaders often develop close relationships with local civic or political activity.

In a world in which many people are frustrated with their experience of work, teaching attracts those interested in self-improvement and the chance to shape authentic, challenging careers. Against the quasi-market in which schools operate, federations help teachers to sustain an ethic of social justice and excellence for all. However, for teachers themselves, the tension between these two value sets is at times exhausting.

	Subject	Child	Learning	Service
Complete autonomy	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
Negotiated autonomy	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	**Entrepreneur**
No autonomy	Broker	Key Worker	**Trades Person**	Sales Person

Educational technician: diversity and flexible systems

The rapid growth of learning science and human enhancement has seen the medicalisation of education. A range of cross-over experts now prescribe personalised programmes of activity for pupils, to be delivered by teachers. Given the quality of pupil behaviour in cognition-enhanced classrooms and the quality of the resources available to them, some teachers are relieved that their work is finally manageable. Teachers play a vital role as custodians of young people, working either an early shift from first thing in the morning or the afternoon shift until late at night.

The expertise of the teaching profession is now largely seen to reside in the systems for learning and assessment that structure their work. Teachers are able to learn on the job and come from a greater variety of backgrounds than ever before. For some, these are marks of a loss of professional autonomy and status. However, for many parents, the sense that teachers are no longer intimidated has created more trusting, personal relationships than ever before. To create coherence across a diverse, rapidly changing workforce, strong professional cultures and informal norms have become more important than ever.

Retention problems and fewer working hours mean that, arguably, teachers' pay and conditions are better than they have ever been. In addition, with the need to constantly re-invent teachers' professionalism, opportunities to learn and share practice are frequent. With open access to the profession, teaching is a vitally important source of social mobility, with many teachers having worked their way up through vocational qualifications and apprenticeships in schools. As many of these people move out of teaching, to be replaced by others, in some areas teaching plays a significant role in regenerating the local economy.

Many teachers feel tremendously warm towards a profession that gave them huge opportunities, a model and ethic of personal improvement and enjoyment of spending time with children. Many also appreciate the ways in which teaching has allowed them to lead a full family life. In this sense, while some teachers work to live rather than living to work, this enables them to reflect on their work, learn and improve in a way that in the past was simply too stressful for many teachers. Teaching continues to produce highly original craftspeople capable of developing teaching practice.

	Subject	**Child**	**Learning**	**Service**
Rich professionalism	Expert	Consultant	Academic	Artist
DIY professionalism	Advisor	Advocate	Coach	Entrepreneur
The new deprofessionalisation	Broker	Key Worker	Trades Person	Sales Person

6. Conclusion

Professionalism is part of the capacity to deliver and our education system needs and deserves that unambiguous recognition.

For teachers, the challenge is to come to terms with the new character of their professionalism. Today, it is more informal and personal than ever before and this brings with it a new set of opportunities and threats. The threats are of stress and exhaustion for individual teachers and of a hidden, creeping fragmentation of the profession as a whole. But with these threats come a host of opportunities rooted in the creativity and entrepreneurialism of the profession both at school and at system-level. However, teachers' professionalism will only provide them with the kind of security and support they need if they are able to acknowledge this new reality and move on from the myth of the golden age.

For policy-makers, the challenge is also to acknowledge the ongoing importance and new character of teachers' professionalism. Over recent years, innovation in what our education system delivers has been combined with new sites of dialogue and authority. New significance for the views of pupils and parents and greater emphasis on professional networking have helped to generate coherence about what the system needs to do and how it should do it. However, there has been nothing like this amount of dialogue about a second set of questions – what this *means* for the education system itself and those within it. As this report shows, the emergence of DIY professionalism makes this more urgent than ever.

The most important reflection about the future of the profession is happening not around the role of classroom teachers but Headteachers, as leaders of whole institutions. Here, there is a growing discourse about 'system leadership'. This is the idea that as Headteachers lead across networks, crossing institutional boundaries, they will need to develop a whole range of new skills. They will need to learn to describe these complex systems publicly and to influence them.

In fact, all the teachers we met, including those who only work within a single classroom, are dealing with the blurring of institutional boundaries, between schools and communities, home and work, public and private. The skills policy-makers are beginning to see that leaders need to understand their role in new ways and to cope with competing pressures are needed by all teachers. We need a set of gradual reforms that provide them with opportunities to acquire and exercise these skills.

This suggestion sits oddly with prevailing pictures of how change happens within public services. The carrot and stick approach misses out the significance of teachers' own identities and reflections in shaping the quality of their work. In other words, it ignores the fact that teachers contribute much more than competence. The irony of this is that in its relationship to the public, the government seems increasingly adept at acknowledging the significance of soft governance. As we saw, from using symbolic legislation to balance civil liberties and security to healthcare through behaviour change, government does understand the power soft governance. However, in relation to employees of the state, the illusion that government retains formal control makes their approach much cruder. Performance-related pay, audit and inspection and central prescription all remain too tempting. They too need to understand that professionalism has changed: the devices listed above have very clear limits in terms of delivering the next phase of progress in the teaching profession. This next phase will develop not out of the carrot and stick (or pressure vs. support) approach but, instead out of the creativity and leadership development that has been created and is a key part of DIY

professionalism and a renewed, shared and supported sense of collective professionalism.

Lessons from the water-cooler

The water-cooler has become a powerful metaphor as a central junction box in the hidden wiring of workplace conversations. It's where events' *real* significance is worked out. To support the skills and confidence DIY professionalism demands of staff and to connect up their experiments with professional roles and protocols, teaching needs more of these kinds of conversations.

Conversations around the water-cooler require three things; a place to meet and talk (the cooler), shared experiences and rituals to talk about (an un-missable television programme, the Christmas party) and a sense of connection and recognition. As we have seen, teachers today lack something of all three. The focus of school reform on the 'what and how' of delivery has limited spaces for professional dialogue and reflection. As diversity across teaching grows, shared rituals – always few and far between – are becoming even scarcer. Holidays, for example, in a world of extended schooling, will increasingly depend upon personal negotiation. Lastly, striking a chord with teachers about their profession is made all the more challenging by the disjunction between its golden age ideal and new reality. The provision of spaces, themes and a sense of their shared relevance are all things that the GTC should strive to provide – they are building block to build on the creative and leadership potential of the new recruits to the profession while giving them a vision of a collective future that is emancipated from the myth of the golden age. Until a new capacity to create a shared story is unlocked through these rituals, the myth of the golden age will continue to hold undue sway over the profession and undermine progress.

New sites of dialogue and authority

We need to see professional dialogue as an essential element of system change. Opportunities to draw together experiences and to codify and understand them are vital for the clarity of both the system as a whole and individual teachers. In particular, the dynamics of constant change and growing inter-dependence with policy-makers, pupils and parents and other professionals see teachers draw from professional resources that they must have an opportunity to collectively replenish.

First, we need a clearer picture across the system of the relationship between teachers and policy-makers. In this regard, the example of the new National Leaders of Education is a promising one. It connects clear rights to policy input with teachers' experience in leading challenging schools, helping in turn to re-position these schools as frontiers not back-waters of educational problem-solving. In convening or connecting with other professional forums, these leaders may be able to play a role in fostering dialogue that is both teacher-led *and* embedded in today's practice. This could prove an important precedent.

It is also interesting to think through on what other kinds of terms access to decision-makers might be brokered. If one thousand local authority teachers sign a petition, what kind of access might they win to their chief executive and how might they reach a collective decision? More broadly, re-engineering relationships across our education system between policy-makers and teachers can create a system in which teachers feel greater ability to question and influence *and* greater collective responsibility for policy decisions.

Many of the decisions that most affect teachers will be made at the local level in relation to the children's workforce. The shaping of local workforce strategies are opportunities to open up powerful local dialogue within and between professional groups, enabling them to ask deep questions about how their roles are changing. At its best, this kind of dialogue can create much more effective children's services, not through attacking professionalism as in principle a barrier to partnership but by working to re-engineer professionalism to work better for everyone. Local authorities and network-based initiatives need to develop their capacity to lead and enable these conversations and to build them into their strategic development.

Lastly, especially for younger teachers or those in primary schools, the relationships that define their professionalism are those with parents. Too often, the potential of these relationships, both individually and collectively, as a site of professional negotiation is missed. We need to ask how the architecture of the education system can help teachers and parents to build relationships that are collaborative rather than confrontational. How can we encourage parents and teachers to work together to agree spending priorities or design curriculum enrichment? How can we help teachers to communicate with large numbers of parents about the work of the school?

A body such as the GTC is well placed to breathe life into and support networks, to map out those places where lines of communication could be strengthened and provide an overarching but flexible architecture for the establishing of new lines of communication.

Creating modern rituals

The story of teachers' lack of shared rituals is an old one. Over thirty years ago, Lortie wrote of teaching in an 'egg-crate' building, seeing little of colleagues in other classrooms and sharing little more with them than a car park.[6] DIY professionalism, and the kind of professional fragmentation it makes possible, makes this lack of shared rituals more serious than ever. Equally, with the new professional focus on strong culture and personal authenticity, the market for innovation in this area might be surprisingly strong.

Rituals are best thought of as 'ceremonialised' collective practices,[7] but they need not be as dreary as that makes them sound. A ritual might be an oath, an anniversary or an event or the shared craft of tinkering with schemes of work. They might be connected to a teachers' school, community or national professional body. Across the education system, it is imperative to work with the profession to generate a clearer picture of which rituals most embody the professional values teachers hold dear and to support them to develop and grow.

Celebrating the work of teachers could be a big part of ritual creation – through the Teacher Learning Academy, the GTC can help to create milestones that celebrate the daily life of teachers and highlight its commitment to professional development.

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[6] Lortie, D. (1975) *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

[7] Durkheim, E. (1992) *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, Second edition (New York: Routledge).

Above everything else, the renewal and strengthening of a teacher professionalism that brings out the best in teachers and children will stem from teachers' daily lives. It is from the patterns of our daily life that our identities are created: strong professional identities will emerge from recognising these patterns, shaping them in appropriate ways and attributing the right value to them.

Striking up a professional conversation

This report shows how difficult it is for anyone to speak engagingly about teachers' professionalism, especially from a national platform. If teachers' professionalism lives in their values and their personal experiences and relationships, it is all too easy for a set-piece speech in a formal setting to entirely miss its mark.

First, educational rhetoric is all too easily straight-jacketed by the golden age ideal, which concentrates conversation about professionalism on the formal and impersonal. The challenge for bodies working with and representing teachers to is to break out of this straight jacket. Conversations about regulation, career development and minimum professional standards are vitally important. However, engaging teachers and influencing their practice is all but impossible without connecting with their values, with professional rituals they recognise and with their everyday experiences of work. For many educational organisations, this needs to be a much stronger priority.

For this to happen, teachers' values and ethical commitments (including instances of resistance and disagreement) need to be perceived as a system resource rather than a hindrance. To date the government has adopted a stance that has both tried to appeal to teachers' values, while at the same time trying to foster competition. Teachers have resisted this and the reaction has been to see the values as a hindrance to system progress. But these values need to be put to work rather than circumvented or ignored – teachers professionalism needs to be protected, shaped and harnessed. Here the voice and the role of the GTC are key since its mission should be to look after the teaching profession as a community of practice.

Second, organisations seeking to represent teachers increasingly stand or fall on the quality of their partnership capacity. In the world of DIY professionalism, no one's role in professional regulation is set in stone. Schools and a host of other organisations increasingly vie to shape professional activity. In this context, to retain their significance and vitality, unions and professional organisations must ensure that they are embedded in networks of local practice. Just as professionalism today travels more like gossip, so professional organisations need to focus on enabling that gossip and on making it public.

In conclusion, our education system is not alone in having changed hugely in recent years – the teaching profession is equally transformed. It has changed more than the public, policy-makers or teachers themselves realise. This demands not only that we change accordingly how we support and regulate teachers but also that we acknowledge the huge significance and power of professional adaptability. In a world that places such growing emphasis on dynamism, we need to remember that teachers are infinitely more adaptable when they are helped to adapt as a group.